



15c

CHALLENGERS OF THE

APPROVED
BY THE
COMICS
CODE
AUTHORITY

JAN.
NO. 71

UNKNOWN



LOOK
AT YOUR
HEROES!

LET THEM BE A
LESSON TO ALL WHO
DARE TRESPASS ON
**SKULL
MOUNTAIN!**



WHEN EVIL CALLS!

IT IS SAID THAT FATE IS LIKE A TWISTING STREAM RUNNING AN IRREGULAR COURSE THROUGH LIVES FAR REMOVED FROM EACH OTHER! DO YOU DOUBT IT? THEN CONSIDER...

THIS IS JOSHUA SLADE, MAYOR OF A TINY VILLAGE NESTLED AT THE FOOT OF SKULL MOUNTAIN...

IN THAT VILLAGE LIVES AN ANCIENT WOMAN KNOWN AS GRANNY DARK! NEIGHBORS WHISPER THAT SHE IS A WITCH...

AND HERE IS CHU, BEASTLY CREATURE FROM A DISTANT PLANET AS HE HIDES IN THE WOODS NEARBY...

A MILE AWAY, THE CHALLENGERS OF THE UNKNOWN ARE BEING LED AWAY FROM UNTRODDEN WILDERNESS BY CORINNA STARK...

SEVEN CREATURES, SEPARATE YET CONNECTED BY A LINK OF DESTINY... SEVEN CREATURES WHO WILL MEET IN A TERRIBLE BURST OF VIOLENCE BEFORE THIS TALE IS TOLD... WHO MUST LISTEN AND ANSWER--

"When Evil Calls!"

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IT IS THAT LAST, HUSHED HOUR... MID-NIGHT... AS A WEARY QUARTET REACH THEIR ALTO...

WHADAYA KNOW? THE WHEELS ARE STILL HERE...

THE WAY OUR LUCK'S BEEN RUNNIN', I FIGURED THE CAR WOULD'VE TURNED INTO A PUMPKIN BY NOW!

IT'S BEEN A BAD 24 HOURS, ALL RIGHT!

YEAH! AND A BUSY 24 HOURS!

...SINCE MONDAY, WE'VE WIPED OUT A BUNCH OF ALIEN INVADERS, BLOWN UP A CASTLE, BUSTED A BLACK-MAGIC CULT AND FINISHED A CERTAIN RAT NAMED STARK!

WATCH YER LIP! YOU'RE TALKIN' 'BOUT CORINNA'S DAD!

I DON'T MIND! MY FATHER WAS HOPELESSLY INSANE! HE'S PROBABLY BETTER OFF DEAD!

...AND THAT HAS ME WORRIED! HE'S BADLY WOUNDED...HE COULDN'T HAVE WALKED AWAY...YET...HE DID!

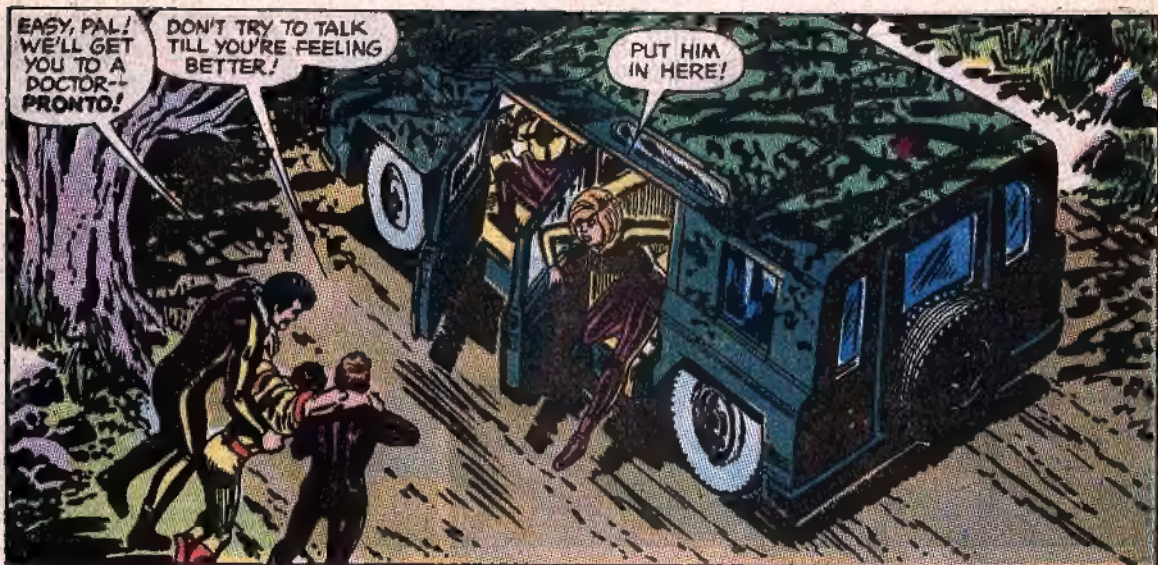
THAT ALIEN--CHU--MUST HAVE BOOSTED HIS STRENGTH SOMEHOW!*

BUT THERE'S ONE THING WE HAVEN'T DONE! PROF IS STILL MISSING!

*THE ABOVE CONVERSATION ABOUT SUMMERIZES THE EVENTS RELATED IN OUR TWO PREVIOUS ISSUES!

YA FERGOT ANOTHER ITEM, LEADER-MAN! NAMELY--THAT CHU ESCAPED!

LOOK--! AHEAD --IT'S PROF!



EASY, PAL!
WE'LL GET
YOU TO A
DOCTOR--
PRONTO!

DON'T TRY TO TALK
TILL YOU'RE FEELING
BETTER!

PUT HIM
IN HERE!

I'VE HAD NURSE'S
TRAINING! I
THINK I CAN
MAKE HIM
COMFORTABLE--

CONSIDERING IT WAS YOUR
OLD MAN WHO DID THIS TO
HIM, MAYBE YOU'D BETTER
KEEP YOUR HANDS TO
YOURSELF!

I'M WARNIN' YA,
RED! MOUTH OFF
TO THE LADY
AGAIN AN' I'LL
CREAM YA!

I FINALLY REALIZED
WHAT HAS HAPPENED
...WHEN WE DESTROYED
THE COMPUTER
MONSTER IT
SEIZED MY MIND...*

I...I ATTEMPTED
TO KILL YOU
ALL SEVERAL
TIMES! NOW AT
LAST I AM
FREE OF IT...



PLEASE DON'T ARGUE!
LET ME SPEAK... WHILE
I CAN... WHILE I AM
MYSELF...



WHY?

*SEE ISSUE NO. 68--EDITOR.



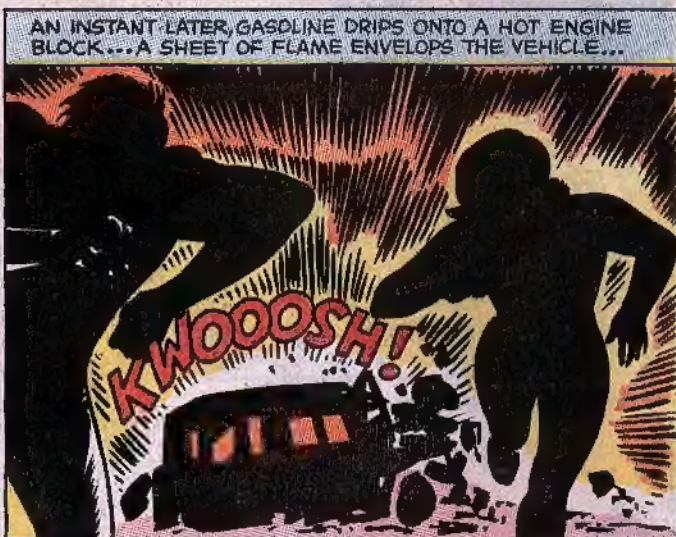
CHU... FOUND ME DYING... GAVE ME
AN INJECTION WHICH SAVED MY
LIFE! AND BROKE THE MONSTER
INSIDE ME! BUT THE INJECTION
DID SOMETHING ELSE, TOO...



...IT MADE ME LIKE
HIM! MADE ME HATE
HUMAN BEINGS!



....DO YOU HEAR ME? HATE!
I DESPISE YOU...!



CONTINUED ON 2ND PAGE FOLLOWING.



RED LANDS JUST AS THE FLAMES REACH A FULL FUEL TANK! THE CAR EXPLODES...



...A WALL OF HEAT SLAPS THE CHALLENGER--



MEANWHILE...

STEADY, ACE... DON'T TELEGRAPH YOUR PLAY UNTIL YOU MAKE IT!

IF HE KEEPS THAT CLUB HIGH, THIS STUNT MIGHT WORK...
IF HE DOESN'T--
SOMEBODY COLLECTS ON MY INSURANCE!



SUDDENLY, ACE STEPS FORWARD, HIS RIGHT WRIST BLOCKING PROF'S FOREARM...

SO FAR, SO GOOD...UNLESS THERE'S NOTHING HUMAN LEFT ABOUT PROF--

...THEN HIS LEFT HAND, STRAIGHT AND STILL AS A BAYONET, ARCS TO THE BASE OF THE OTHER'S SKULL!

--THIS SHOULD COOL HIM!





BE ENTERPRISING!

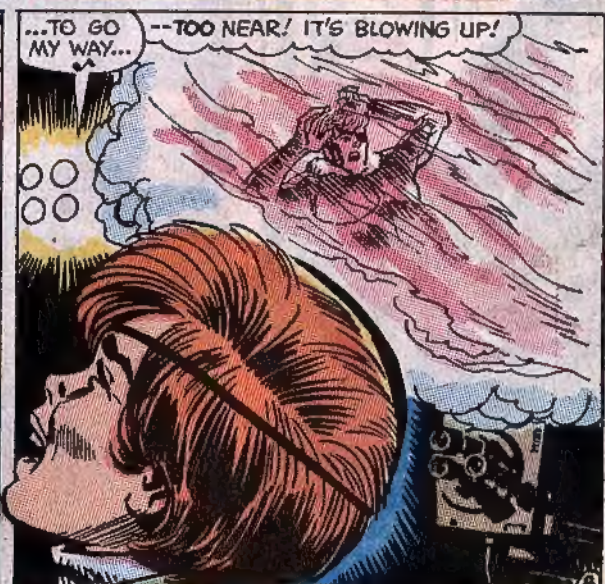


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NOTHING! AFTER
THE BIG BANG,
RED ISN'T
SEEING--AT
ALL!



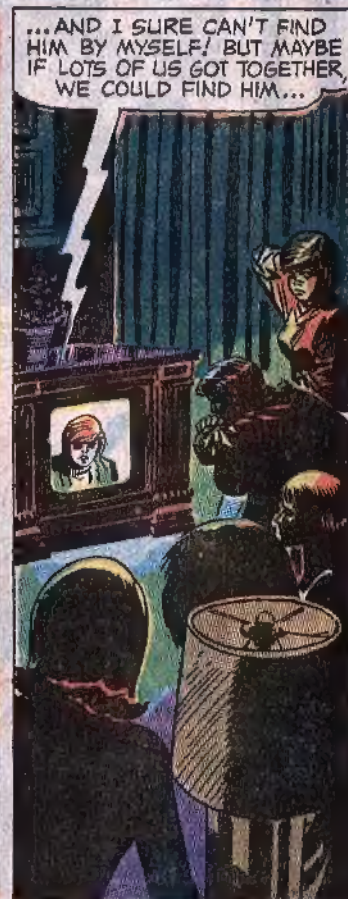
THE KID'S
STOPPED!
PART OF THE
ACT, COLONEL?

NO! AN' I'M
GONNA MURDER
THE PUNK!

HEY, FOLKS!...I'M SORRY...I
DON'T WANNA GO ON WARBLING!
REASON IS, MY BROTHER RED'S
IN HOT WATER UP TO HIS
HAIRLINE...



THEY SAY A LOTTA YOU DIG
ME...WELL, IF THAT'S TRUE,
I GOT A FAVOR TO ASK! SEE,
RED'S SOMEPLACE IN THE
OZARKS...ON SKULL
MOUNTAIN! I DON'T
KNOW EXACTLY
WHERE...

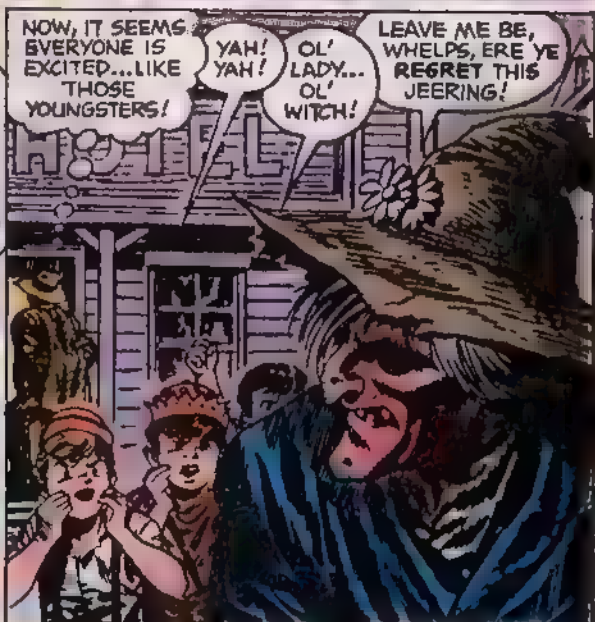
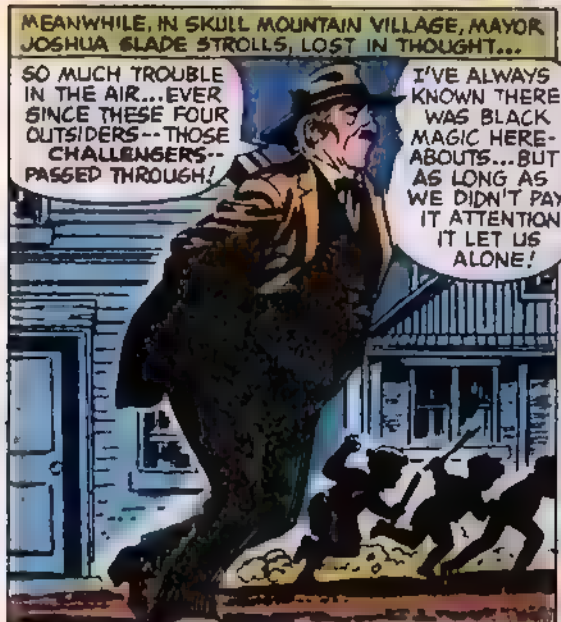


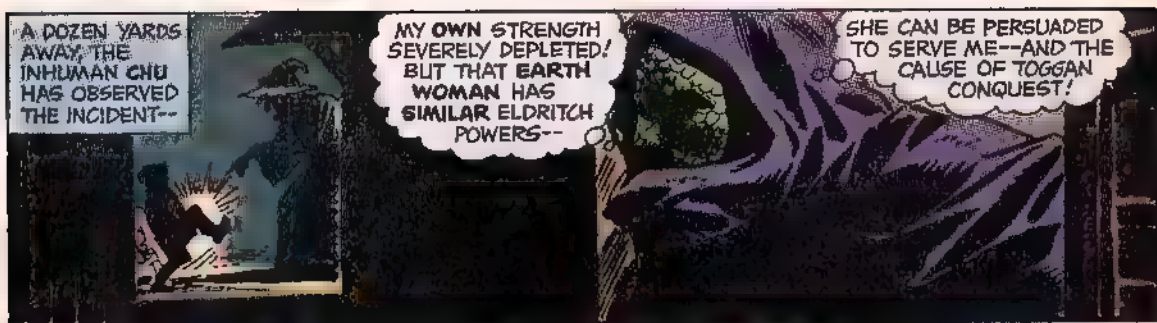
...AND I SURE CAN'T FIND
HIM BY MYSELF! BUT MAYBE
IF LOTS OF US GOT TOGETHER,
WE COULD FIND HIM...



...SO I'M ASKIN' ANYBODY WHO
HASN'T ANYTHING BETTER TO DO
TO MEET ME THERE! WHAT
DO YOU SAY, PEOPLE...?

I SAY...
SURE, TINO
OL' KIDDO!





A DOZEN YARDS AWAY, THE INHUMAN CHU HAS OBSERVED THE INCIDENT--

MY OWN STRENGTH SEVERELY DEPLETED! BUT THAT EARTH WOMAN HAS SIMILAR ELDRITCH POWERS--

SHE CAN BE PERSUADED TO SERVE ME--AND THE CAUSE OF TOGGAN CONQUEST!



AND WHAT OF THE CHALLENGERS? A FEW MINUTES AFTER RED'S TRAGIC ACCIDENT, THEY ARE INCHING DOWN TOWARD THE VILLAGE...

WE CAN'T BE TOO CAREFUL...NOW WITH CHU SOMEWHERE AHEAD OF US, I'LL SCOUT THE TERRAIN...

LIKE USUAL, YER SHOWIN' US THE WAY, PAL!

LET ME GUIDE YOU, RED!

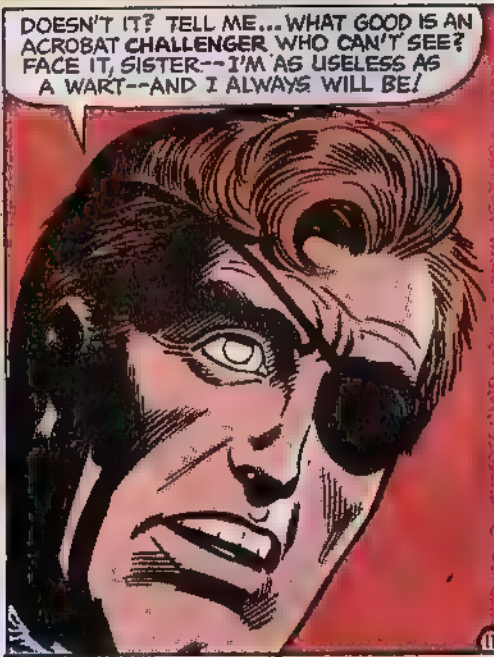
YEAH, I'LL LET YOU... 'CAUSE THE ROCK HAS TO CARRY PROF, AND ACE IS LEADING!



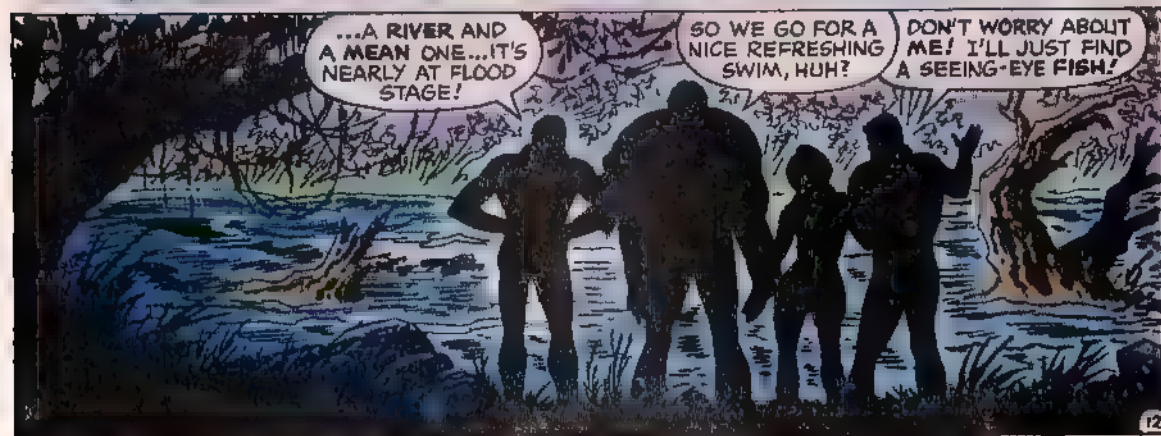
BUT DON'T FIGURE THIS CHANGES ANYTHING... I STILL DON'T LIKE YOU, MISS STARK!

IF I HAD GUTS, I'D STAY HERE AND DIE DECENT!

STOP IT! STOP FEELING SORRY FOR YOURSELF! THIS DOESN'T MEAN THE END OF THE WORLD FOR YOU!



DOESN'T IT? TELL ME...WHAT GOOD IS AN ACROBAT CHALLENGER WHO CAN'T SEE? FACE IT, SISTER--I'M AS USELESS AS A WART--AND I ALWAYS WILL BE!



I'LL HELP ROCKY WITH PROF!
CORINNA, KEEP TALKING TO RED...
HE CAN HOME IN ON YOUR VOICE!

DON'T WORRY IF YOU GET CARRIED
DOWNSTREAM...DON'T FIGHT
THE CURRENT ANY MORE
THAN NECESSARY!

NOW LET'S MOVE!

ALREADY FATIGUED, THE COURAGEOUS GROUP STRIKES OUT INTO THE ANGRY WATER...STRAINING EVERY
MUSCLE...STAVING OFF TOTAL EXHAUSTION BY SHEER DETERMINATION...

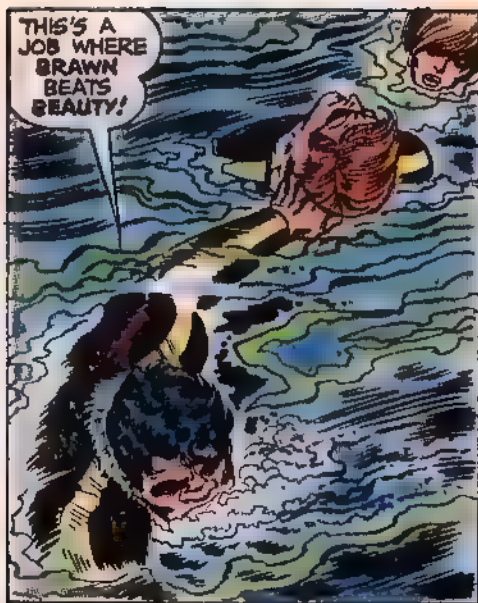
AFTER AN
ETERNITY
OF FIERCE
STRUGGLE,
THEY REACH
THEIR GOAL
...ALMOST!

UNNG--!

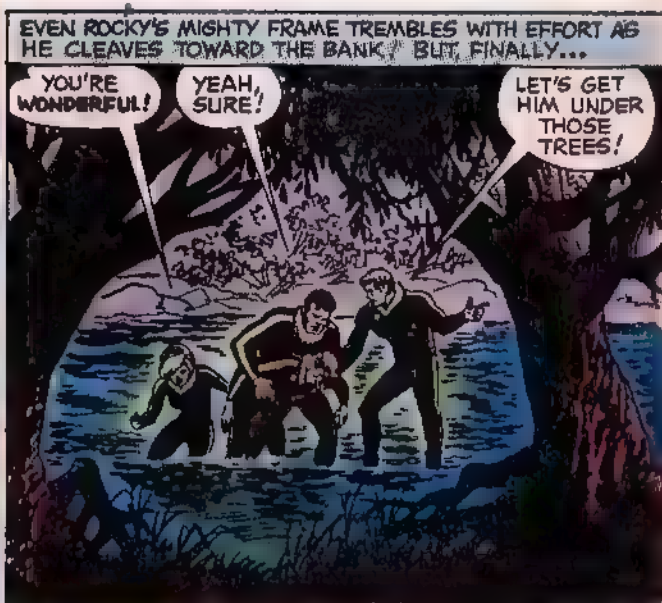
RED!
WATCH
OUT! THE
TREE!

I...I'M NOT STRONG ENOUGH...
HE'S SLIPPING AWAY--!

OUTTA
THE WAY,
CORINNA!



THIS'S A
JOB WHERE
BRAWN
BEATS
BEAUTY!



EVEN ROCKY'S MIGHTY FRAME TREMBLES WITH EFFORT AS
HE CLEAVES TOWARD THE BANK! BUT, FINALLY...

YOU'RE
WONDERFUL!

YEAH,
SURE!

LET'S GET
HIM UNDER
THOSE
TREES!



HE'S COMING
AROUND...

THANK
HEAVEN--!

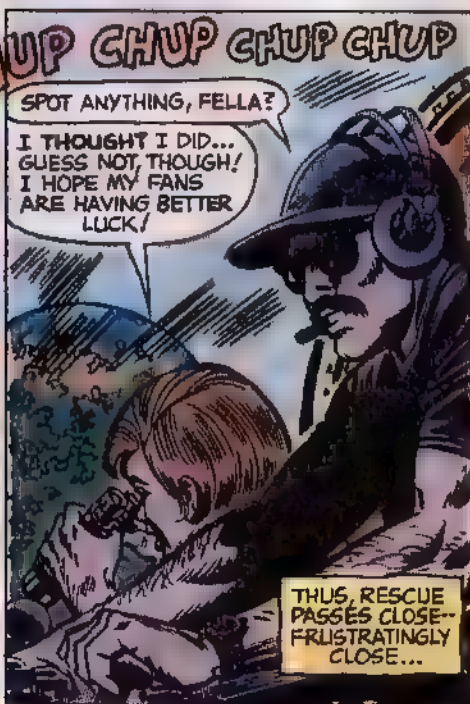
I HEAR SOME
KINDA PLANE
ABOVE US --
BUT IT'S TOO
DARK TO
SIGNAL
ANYWAY!



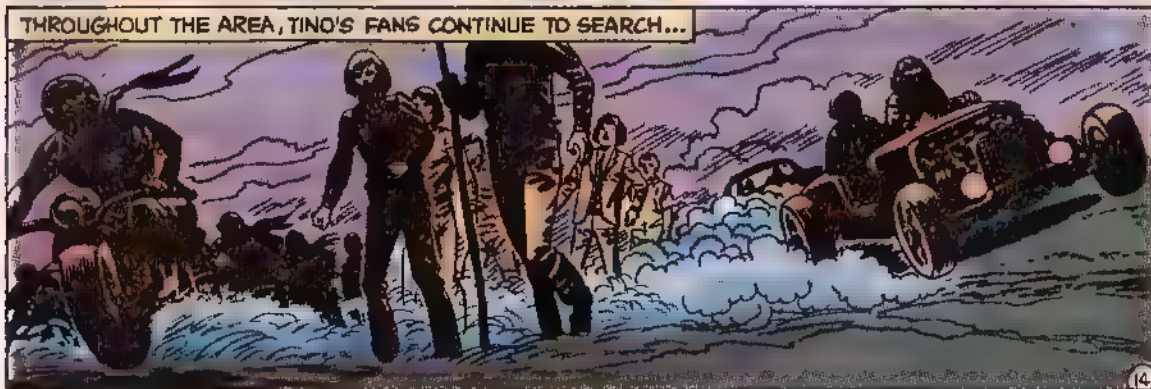
CHUP CHUP CHUP CHUP

SPOT ANYTHING, FELLA?

I THOUGHT I DID...
GUESS NOT, THOUGH!
I HOPE MY FANS
ARE HAVING BETTER
LUCK!



THUS, RESCUE
PASSÉS CLOSE--
FRUSTRATINGLY
CLOSE...



THROUGHOUT THE AREA, TINO'S FANS CONTINUE TO SEARCH...

...BUT IN VAIN! IT IS ONLY A MILE TO THE VILLAGE...BUT FOR THE BATTERED, DRAINED CHALLENGERS, THAT MILE SEEMS TO BE A THOUSAND. FINALLY, HOWEVER, THEY STUMBLE ONTO THE SINGLE STREET...

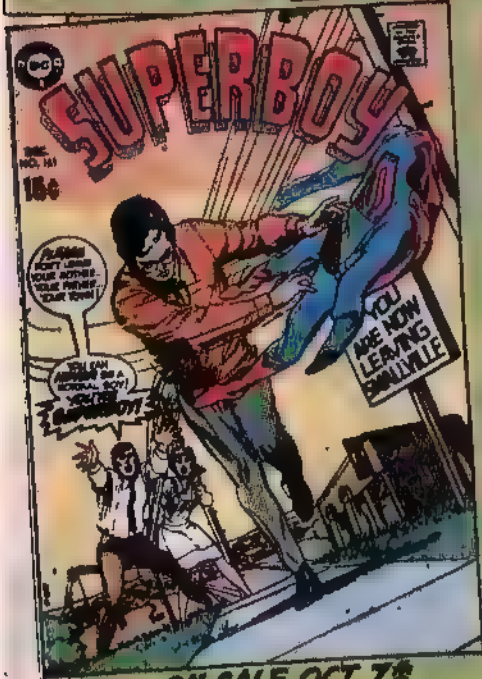
MISTER...WE NEED FOOD... SHELTER...AND A DOCTOR!

THE OUTSIDERS--! GO BACK THE WAY YOU CAME!

WE DO NOT WANT YOU-- I WARN YOU--WE WILL KILL YOU IF YOU COME FURTHER!

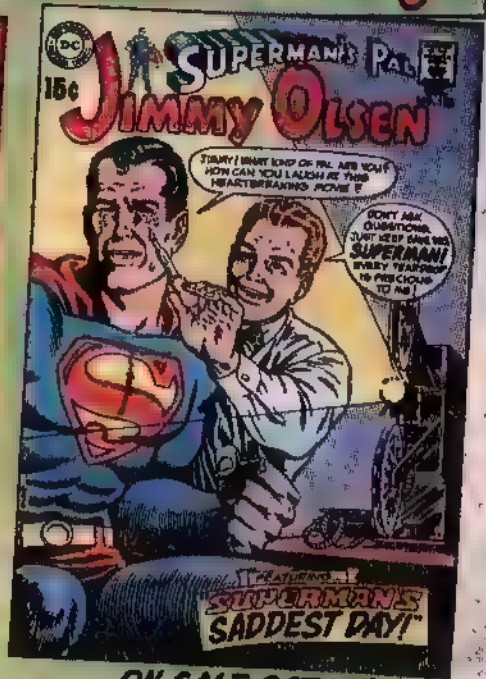


TROUBLE AND TEARS!



ON SALE OCT. 7*

WHY?



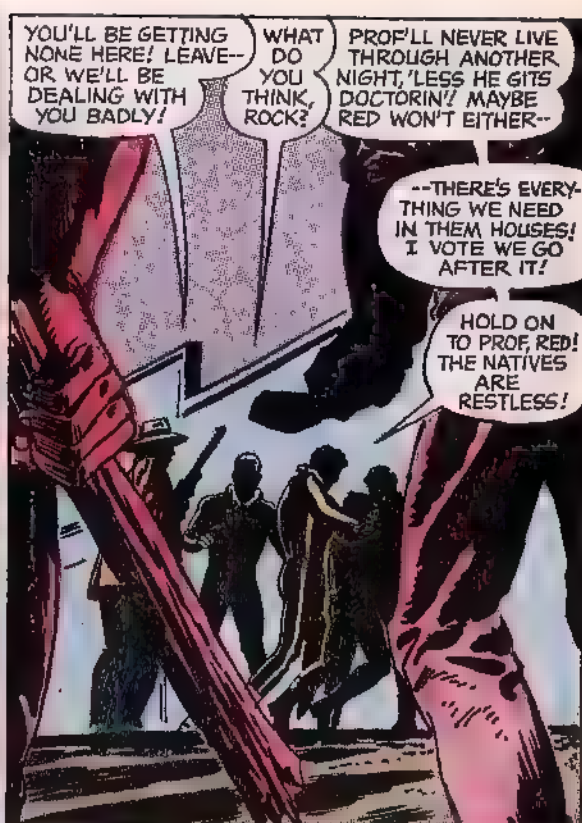
ON SALE OCT. 14*



YOU WILL
BRING US
GREAT
TROUBLE!

WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT--?
LOOK AT US--WE COULDN'T HURT
YOU IF WE WANTED TO!

CAN'T YOU
SEE WE NEED
HELP?



YOU'LL BE GETTING
NONE HERE! LEAVE--
OR WE'LL BE
DEALING WITH
YOU BADLY!

WHAT
DO
YOU
THINK,
ROCK?

PROF'LL NEVER LIVE
THROUGH ANOTHER
NIGHT, 'LESS HE GETS
DOCTORIN'! MAYBE
RED WON'T EITHER--

--THERE'S EVERY-
THING WE NEED
IN THEM HOUSES!
I VOTE WE GO
AFTER IT!

HOLD ON
TO PROF, RED!
THE NATIVES
ARE
RESTLESS!



IT'LL BE THE TWO
OF US AGAINST
A MOB! WE WON'T
HAVE A CHANCE!

EITHER WAY, WE'VE
HAD IT! I'D KINDA
LIKE TO END UP
FIGHTIN'!



THEN--LET'S
GET STARTED!

RIGHT BEHIND
YA, CHUM!

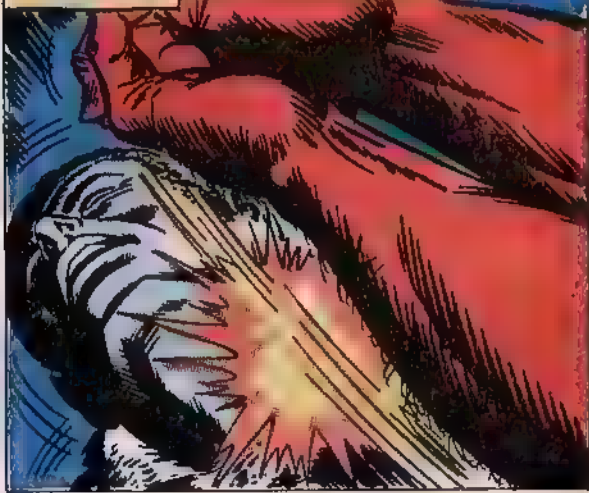
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PERHAPS, WERE ACE AND ROCKY NOT BONE-TIRED AND DEEPLY DESPAIRING, THEIR TRAINING MIGHT SAVE THEM...



...BUT OVERCOME BY COMPLETE EXHAUSTION AND THE NUMBERS OF THEIR FOE, THE BATTLE IS HOPELESS!



LONG AFTER HE IS BEATEN TO THE GROUND, ROCKY'S MIGHTY BODY FIGHTS ON...SO GREAT IS HIS SPIRIT! BEYOND HUMAN ENDURANCE, HE STRUGGLES...



...ONLY TO BE CRUSHED MERCILESSLY INTO UNCONSCIOUSNESS. AT LAST, EVEN HIS TREMENDOUS STRENGTH FAILS, AND HE LIES STILL...



LATER--HOW MUCH LATER HE CANNOT TELL--ACE FORCES OPEN HIS EYELIDS...AND HEARS A FAMILIAR VOICE THAT IS COLD AS THE VOID...

WE MEET A SECOND TIME, EARTHLING! THERE WILL BE NO THIRD!

CHU!



WE BE REGRETFUL ABOUT THIS, OUTSIDER! WE BE NO BAD MEN!

NOT BAD, EH? WELL, YOU'RE WRONG! ANYONE WHO SERVES CHU--

THEY ARE NOT MY WILLING SLAVES!

AYE! TOOK SOME CONVINCING, THEY DID...I PERFORMED A SMIDGEN OF MAGIC UPON ONE OF THEIR YOUNG...



...AND PROMISED LIKE TREATMENT TO ANY AS OPPOSES ME AND MR. CHU!

HEEE...THIS ONE'S HANDSOME! SHAME HE HAS TO DIE!

WHAT DO YOU STAND TO GAIN FROM CHU, OLD WOMAN?

VENGEANCE! FOLK HAVE ALWAYS LAUGHED AT ME...DOUBTED MY SORCERY...



...BY COMBINING MY WILES WITH HIS, I'LL BE ABLE TO MAKE THEM PAY!

YOU'RE WILLING TO SACRIFICE HUMANITY FOR CHEAP REVENGE!

YOU PEOPLE OF THE TOWN--DON'T YOU REALIZE WHAT YOU'RE DOING? CAN'T YOU UNDERSTAND WHAT WILL BECOME OF YOU?



MAYOR SLADE...PERMIT CHU TO GRASP YOU, AND HE WILL HOLD YOU FOR LIFE! YOU'LL BE LESS THAN A MAN...NO MORE THAN A THING...

...A TOY TO AMUSE HIM... A SLAVE!

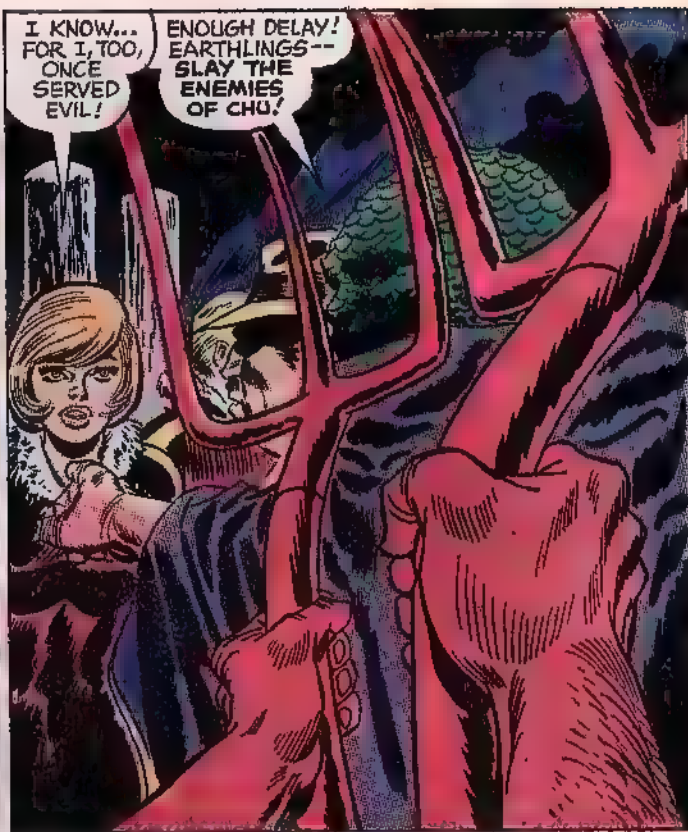
WHEN EVIL CALLS, YOU MUST NOT ANSWER...AT PERIL OF YOUR VERY SOUL!





I AM TRULY SORRY...
WE ARE WEAK--
AND AFRAID...!
FORGIVE ME!

NO, I WON'T FOR-
GIVE YOU... RATHER,
I PITY YOU! FROM
THIS MOMENT ON,
YOUR LIFE WILL BE
AN AGONY OF
SELF-HATE!



I KNOW...
FOR I, TOO,
ONCE
SERVED
EVIL!

ENOUGH DELAY!
EARTHLINGS--
SLAY THE
ENEMIES
OF CHU!



LOOKS LIKE I WOKE
UP IN TIME FOR MY
OWN DYN! O.KAY...
SO LONG, CHUMS!
IT'S BEEN GRINS...

'BYE,
ROCK...
CORINNA!

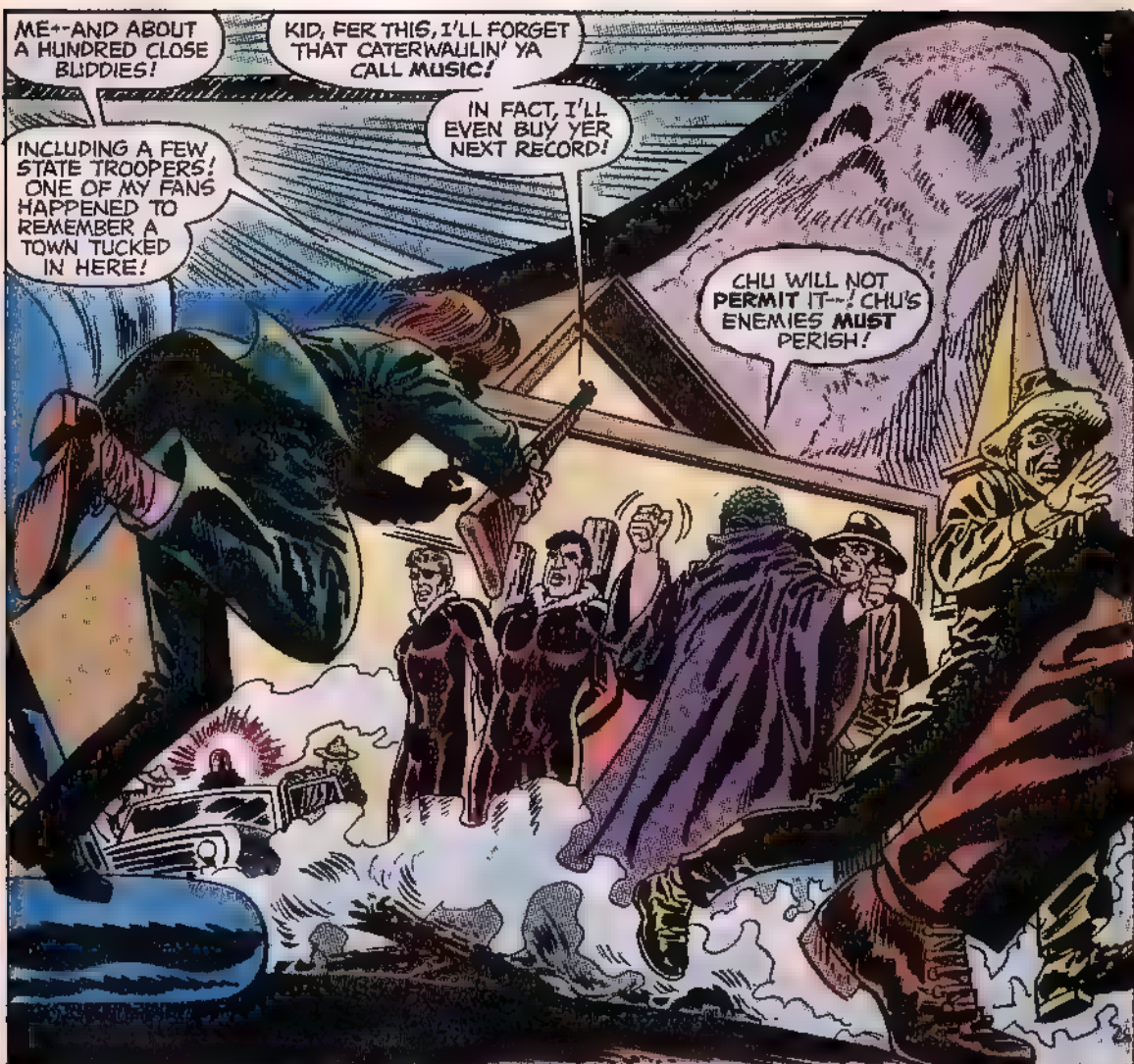
GOODBYE... AND
THANKS! THOUGH
I'VE BEEN WITH
YOU FOR LESS
THAN A WEEK, I
FOUND LOVE...

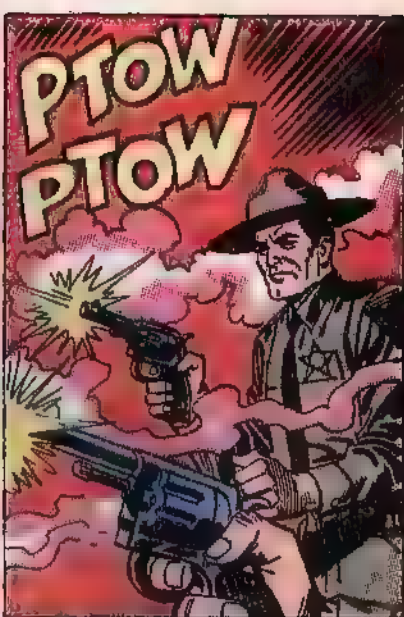


CHUP CHUP CHUP

DROP THOSE FORKS... OR
YOU'LL GET DROPPED!

THAT'S
TINO--!
BUT WHAT
CAN ONE
KID DO?





HE'S GONE! WHO WAS HE, FELLA?

SOME KIND OF A MAN--! SOME KIND OF A VERY GOOD MAN...



THE DEAD AND INJURED ARE FLOWN TO A HOSPITAL IN ST. LOUIS...



...WHERE CORINNA, TINO, ACE AND ROCKY BEGIN A TERRIBLE VIGIL!

HOW MUCH LONGER WILL PROF AND RED BE IN THE OPERATING ROOM?

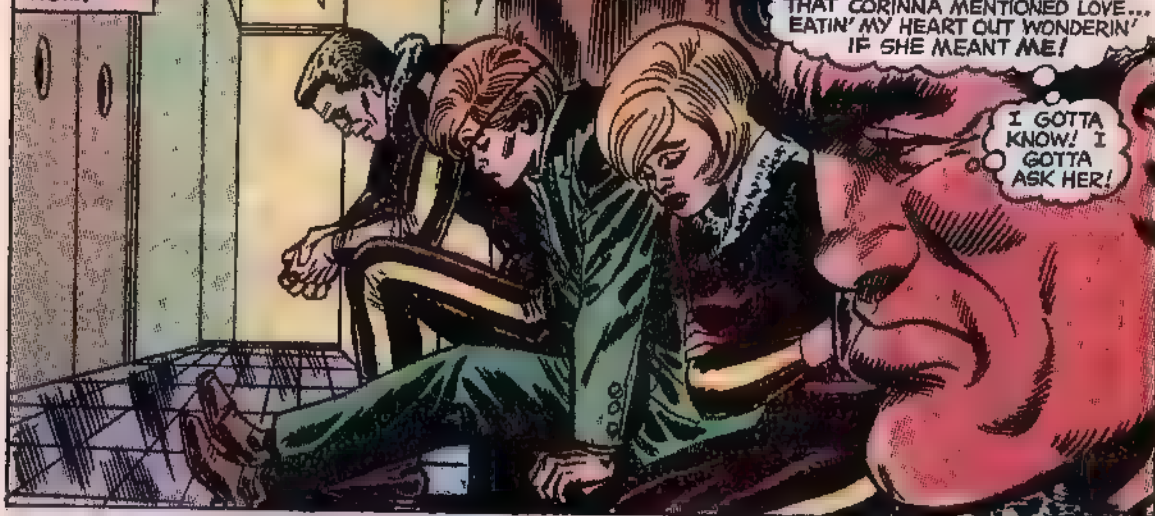
DOC SAID IT COULD TAKE HOURS--! YOU GUYS BEEN PRAYING--LIKE ME?

YES! PRAYING... HOPING...

I'M A RAT, THINKIN' 'BOUT MYSELF WHEN MY PALS ARE UNDER THE KNIFE...

...BUT I CAN'T HELP REMEMBERIN' THAT CORINNA MENTIONED LOVE... EATIN' MY HEART OUT WONDERIN' IF SHE MEANT ME!

I GOTTA KNOW! I GOTTA ASK HER!



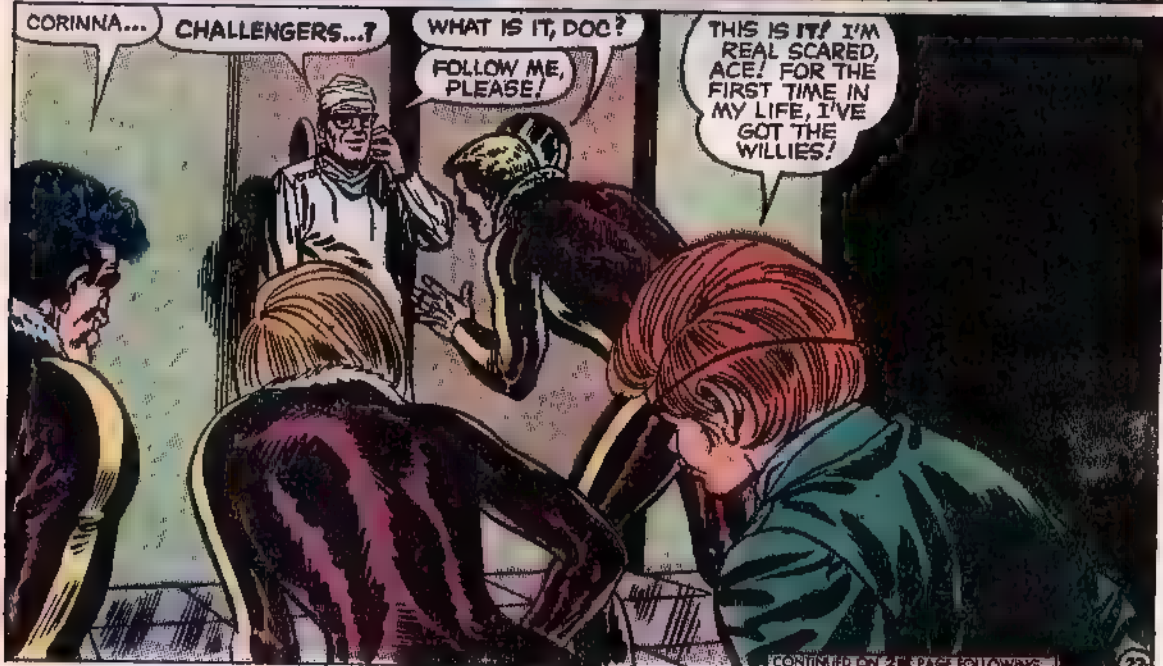
CORINNA...

CHALLENGERS...?

WHAT IS IT, DOC?

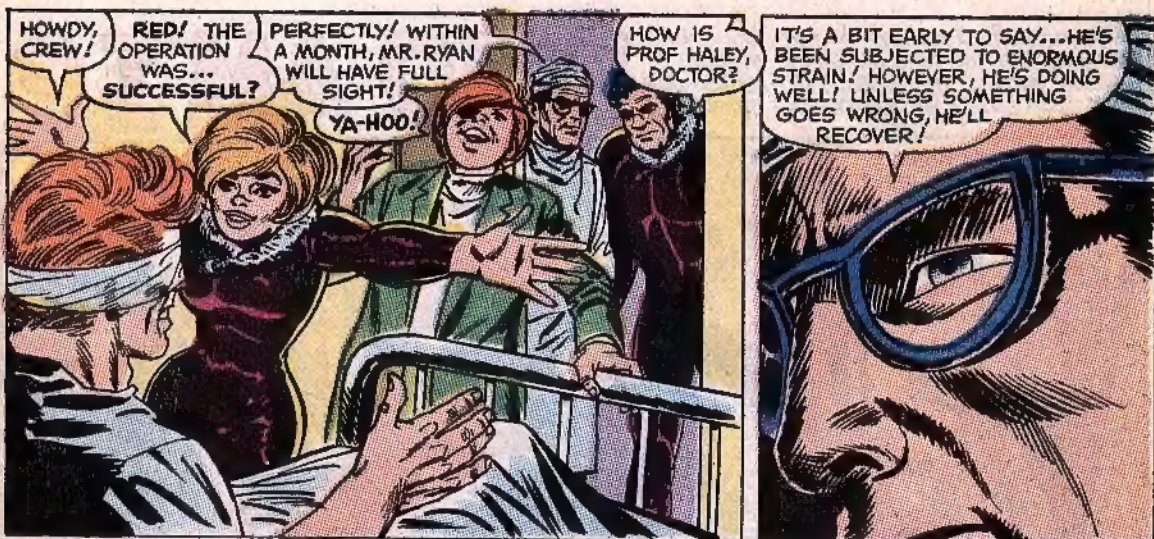
FOLLOW ME, PLEASE!

THIS IS IT! I'M REAL SCARED, ACE! FOR THE FIRST TIME IN MY LIFE, I'VE GOT THE WILLIES!

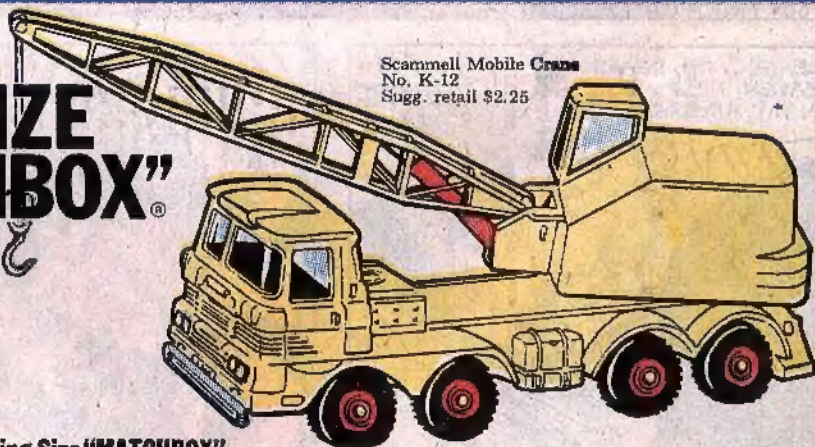


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22



NEW KING-SIZE "MATCHBOX" MODEL OF THE MONTH.



Scammell Mobile Crane
No. K-12
Sugg. retail \$2.25

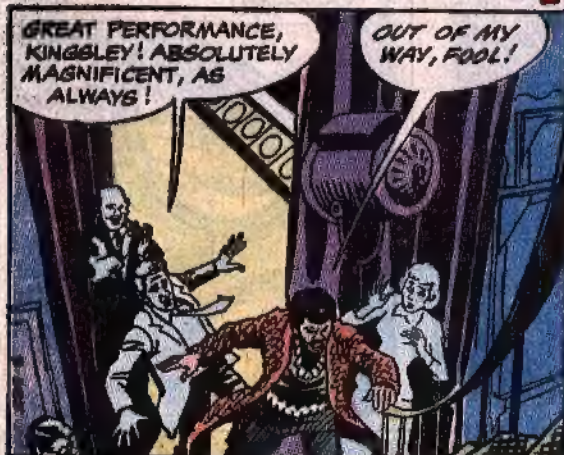
The tough jobs call for King-Size "MATCHBOX".

The new Scammell Mobile Crane looks like it just rolled in from the construction site. Check out the exciting details: four axles, a crane operators cab that rotates a full 360° just like its big brother, and a hoist that can be raised and lowered. Every real "MATCHBOX" expert needs one. And to be sure your collection is up to date, write for free catalogue.

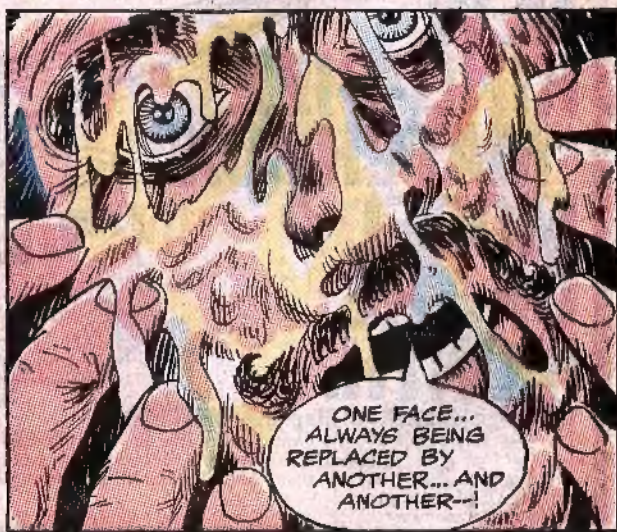
FRED BRONNER CORPORATION, A Division of Lesney Products & Co. Ltd., 120 East 23rd Street, New York, N.Y. 10010

HE WAS HAILED AS ONE OF THE GREATEST ACTORS OF HIS TIME, A LIVING LEGEND KNOWN TO ALL THE WORLD, YET HE HIMSELF WAS TORMENTED BY THE SEARING QUESTION...

WHO AM I?



YES, OVER THE YEARS HE HAD ABANDONED HIS OWN IDENTITY TO IMMERSE HIMSELF SO THOROUGHLY INTO EACH NEW ROLE HE PLAYED, THAT FOR SOME TIME NOW DOUBT GNAWED AT HIS FEVERED BRAIN... "WHO AM I?" HIS SOUL CRIED, "WHO AM I?"



FOR ONE BRIEF MOMENT,
THERE IS A GLINT OF
RECOGNITION...

I'VE SEEN IT
BEFORE! INDEED,
IT IS FAMILIAR
TO ME...

SUDDENLY HE IS GRIPPED BY A
TOWERING RAGE, AND...

NO, NO! DON'T STARE
AT ME-- DON'T DARE
SMILE AT ME LIKE
SOME NAMELESS
THING!

UNHAND ME, YOU VILLAIN!
I DON'T NEED YOUR PITY
OR YOUR SCORN! FATE
MOCKS ME NOW, BUT ONE
DAY I WILL UNLOCK THE
SECRET TO MY NAME...
MY TRUE IDENTITY!

MR. KINGSLEY,
CONTROL
YOURSELF!
PLEASE!

HELP,
SOMEBODY--
HELP!

GRADUALLY, LIGHT KNIVES THROUGH THE MIST CLOUDING THE ACTOR'S MIND, UNTIL...

MY SEARCH IS ENDED! LOOK AT ME,
EVERYBODY! I KNOW WHO I
AM! AT LAST, I KNOW--

I'M THE PATIENT IN CELL 13... OR...
OR IS THIS, TOO, A NEW,
ROLE I'M PLAYING?

THE
END

LET'S CHAT WITH THE CHALLS

Address all mail to:
CHALLENGERS OF THE UNKNOWN
National Periodicals
575 Lexington Avenue
New York, N.Y. 10022

B-384



Dear Editor:

I have had trouble locating the latest issues of CHALLENGERS OF THE UNKNOWN. I am wondering whether the people who distribute the magazine have been avoiding our city entirely. So, I am enclosing a quarter, asking you to send me the latest issue, using the balance of the money for extra postage.

Deb Field, Pocatello, Idaho

Similar complaints from fans around the country are causing us considerable concern. We are investigating the failure to exhibit our publication, and hope to take corrective measures. Meanwhile, if any of you way out there in fanland are failing to find your copies, we'd be grateful if you flashed us the news. Please, do not—repeat, do not!—send us coins, postage stamps, or your favorite jackknife in exchange for a copy. Only a limited number of file copies are retained in our office for editorial and business use.

We've also received an overwhelming batch of requests for old issues, going as far back as the historic time the Challengers appeared in Showcase. These we welcome from our friends and scholars, and if you include a self-addressed, stamped envelope, we'll speed them on to a private source that may be helpful.—Ed.

...

Dear Editor:

Not until I read this Letters Page in #69 did I realize why the CHALLENGERS OF THE UNKNOWN is so special to me. I, too, am living on borrowed time, so to speak. Until now, I never considered my experience important, but in the light of the Challengers' brush with death, I look back on it with awe.

It occurred about 11 years ago when I was four years old. I was playing near our house with some kittens, when for no reason at all I suddenly rose and strolled over to my mother, who was sitting on the porch. I'd only taken a few steps when there was a great crashing of brush, and a full-grown bear ran right over the spot where I had been playing, and continued over the hill until he disappeared. If some force hadn't made me move, I'd surely have been crushed. What a harrowing experience! Never shall I forget that bear pounding over the spot where I had been a few seconds earlier.

Lonnie Thompson, Iron Gate, Va.

Thanks, Lonnie, for your very exciting account. If any of you feel that you're qualified to become a charter member of the Death Cheaters, you can bet your bippy we'd like to hear from you.—Ed.

Dear Editor:

So how come you killed our Prof? And replaced him with a woman, of all people?

Jerry Wilson, Omaha, Neb.

So who says we killed him? He's in the deep freeze, the cryogenic unit created by Corinna's pappy, Doc Stark! And will he come back in the next emotion-packed, thrill-laden issue entitled "A Plague of Darkness," which Denny O'Neil has just sent steaming from his blistering typewriter? Have we news for you!

What about our charming and comely Corinna? You against girls or something? Not only are our female readers squealing with delight, but the masculine members of our audience are also roaring their welcome.

"I really dig Corinna," writes Kevin Cloud from Santa (oil slick) Barbara, Calif. "And I think I speak for many when I say I hope she stays on as a permanent Challenger. I also think she should be skilled in the art of self-defense."

You can count on it, Kev ol' kid, but whether the chick makes the grade in the foreseeable future will depend solely on her. One thing's for sure—she's going to be a strong influence on our Challengers' lives. Her old man temporarily disposed of Prof; she's started a slow-burning feud between Rocky and Red, and she's determined to prove that the female of the species is as brave as the male.—Ed.

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Dear Editor:

Ever since Red's eye operation many, many issues ago, I've been wondering if such a transplant was possible. The newspapers relate the wondrous strides medicine has made, but since this operation deals with the optic nerve, could such a transplant succeed? I'm a pre-med student, hence my interest.

John Bramwell, Chicago

A total eye transplant was attempted recently on a patient in a Texas hospital. The success of the procedure depended on how long the delicate nerve tissues would stay alive. One of the surgeons said the chief problem was regeneration of the optic nerve and whether the transplanted eye remained free of fluid. Transplants were successful in animals, but, he cautioned, it's difficult to maintain nerve fibers for a long time without the death of nerve cells. It was subsequently learned that the operation failed. Bear in mind, however, if the exchange of Red's and Tino's eyes succeeded, it was due to the magic slyly and secretly unleashed by the insidious Madoga of the Legion of the Weird.—Ed.